



Maine has always been proud of its wildlands – the Big Woods, land of Indian and trapper, of white pine tall enough for masts on His Majestys ships, of mountain lion, moose, and eagle. Much of the wildness was still there when Thoreau went in by birchbark canoe, a little over a century ago. And much of it remains. There is spruce and fir, moose and beaver, lake and mountain and whitewater enough to satisfy generations of Americans. More and more, as northeastern U.S. develops, the Maine woods are becoming an almost unparalleled resource, both for tree production and for recreational opportunity. But who is to come forward to say that this resource must not be squandered? Can we guarantee that the next generations will be able to set out in a canoe and know that adventure is just around the bend?

"Report on the Wildlands"
State of Maine
Legislative Research Committee
Publication 104-1A, 1969

Note: This preliminary draft evolved from several planning staff and Commission meetings held in 2005. The Commission's staff anticipates that this preliminary draft will continue to evolve as the Commission hears thoughts and opinions from the public, learns more about the jurisdiction's land use patterns of the past decade, and begins to update its specific goals and policies.

Chapter 1

Vision, Goals and Policies

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The Maine Land Use Regulation Commission (LURC or the Commission) is charged with extending the principles of planning and zoning across its jurisdiction, which spans more than 10 million acres of the State of Maine. Known historically as the Wildlands of Maine, this vast landscape is the least populous and least developed portion of Maine and encompasses the largest block of undeveloped forestland in the Northeastern United States.

This Comprehensive Land Use Plan provides the Commission with an opportunity to not only look back at trends and evaluate their effects, but also to develop a vision for the future of Maine's wildlands. The vision, below, describes how the jurisdiction ideally would look in the future if change is successfully accommodated. The goals, policies and implementation measures of this plan, which follow, are aimed at attaining this vision.

Vision for the Wildlands of Maine

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The wildlands of Maine will forever retain their unique principal values and will exemplify a pattern of sustainable land uses.

“...forever retain their unique principal values”

The Commission has identified four principal values that define the distinctive character of Maine's wildlands. If the vision for the wildlands is to be realized, these values cannot be compromised:

- **Diverse, abundant and unique natural resource values**, including lakes, rivers and other waters, fish and wildlife, plants and natural communities, ecological values, scenic and cultural values, coastal islands, mountain areas and other geologic resources and features.
- **Fiber and food production, and the tradition of a working landscape**. Many community benefits and quality of life characteristics rely upon a working

landscape, in particular the maintenance of the jurisdiction's forests as well as the economic health of the forest products industry.

- **Diverse and abundant recreational opportunities, particularly for primitive pursuits**. The jurisdiction provides a landscape for primitive recreational activities and diversified, non-intensive use of recreational resources in which a wide range of people can participate generally at a reasonable cost.
- **Remoteness and natural character values**, including the uniqueness of a vast forested landscape that is largely undeveloped and remote from major population centers.

Remoteness and the relative absence of development are perhaps the most distinctive of the jurisdiction's principal values, due mainly to their increasing rarity in the Eastern United States. Remoteness also enhances other values,

particularly recreational opportunities and natural resources. Remoteness and natural character values may be difficult to quantify but they are integral to the jurisdiction's identity and to its overall character.

While these principal values collectively define the jurisdiction, they are not equally represented. Some areas have abundant natural resource values or a unique physical feature. Other places lack distinctive natural resources, but serve as productive forestlands or contribute to the jurisdiction's natural and cultural character. Consequently, the jurisdiction has room for a wide range of land uses. The challenge is to accommodate these uses without degrading the values that make Maine's wildlands unique.

“...exemplify a pattern of sustainable land uses”

The Commission recognizes that, in addition to retaining the jurisdiction's unique principal values, a pattern of sustainable land uses is essential to achieving a vision for the future of Maine's wildlands. Such a land use pattern should meet present and future needs without compromising the principal values of Maine's wildlands. It is distinguished by the following characteristics:

- Retains extensive forests, undeveloped shorelines, remote woodland character, and unique collection of natural and cultural resources and values.
- Provides for a continuation of traditional ways of life, rural communities, sustainable economic opportunities and outdoor recreation for the people of Maine and its visitors.
- Supports development in places where the principal values of the jurisdiction are least impacted and in areas identified by the Commission as most appropriate for development.
- Encourages conservation of places where principal values of the jurisdiction are most threatened and in areas identified by the Commission as least appropriate for development.

These defining characteristics of a pattern of sustainable land uses are fairly well represented in the jurisdiction's historic land use pattern. Maine's wildlands have historically been comprised of vast areas of relatively undeveloped land with concentrations of development principally near organized areas and relatively few scattered seasonal residential dwellings elsewhere. Such a land use pattern is generally conducive to meeting present

and future needs while permanently retaining the principal values of the jurisdiction.

Meeting This Vision

Many of the land use trends of the past several decades are consistent with the jurisdiction's historic land use pattern, and thus have served Maine's wildlands well. However, several trends pose potential risks to attaining the vision for the wildlands:

- **Inappropriate location of development.** The creation of residential lots in areas deemed inappropriate for development threatens all four principal values and is at odds with the characteristics of a sustainable land use pattern. Although the Legislature's and Commission's approach to guiding land uses to appropriate locations within the jurisdiction has advanced considerably over the agency's 35-year history, there remains room for improvement.
- **Patchwork of conservation.** Despite the Commission's hands-off approach to land conservation, roughly one-fifth of the jurisdiction is under some form of conservation. Such conservation efforts have created a patchwork of places that are generally off limits to development. However, without a master plan guiding these efforts, the Commission's current approach to land conservation does not necessarily encourage conservation of places where principal values are most at risk.
- **Changing land ownership patterns.** The wave of land transfer activity in recent history has given rise to increased ownership fragmentation and a noticeable change in the profile of land owners in Maine's wildlands. The potential secondary impacts of these trends raise serious questions as to whether the Commission's current approach to guiding land uses will permanently protect the principal values of Maine's wildlands.

These trends and other emerging issues facing the jurisdiction are further discussed in Chapter 4.

By fine-tuning its planning and zoning approach, the Commission can address the trends that are inconsistent with the future vision for Maine's wildlands and thus ensure the existence of a place that forever retains its unique principal values and exemplifies a pattern of sustainable land uses. The goals, policies and implementation measures which follow are intended to accomplish this.